DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 293 UD 029 320

AUTHOR	Ramirez, Elizabeth Weiser; And Others
TITLE	Making the Most of Your Child's Education Volume III: What about College? Book III: Paying for College.
INSTITUTION	ASPIRA Association, Inc., Washington, DC. National Office.
SPONS AGENCY	Philip Morris Inc., New York, NY.
PUB DATE	93
NOTE	46p.; For volumes I and II, see ED 322 239 and ED 327 626; for the other books in volume III, see UD 029 318-319.
AVAILABLE FROM	ASPIRA Association, Inc., National Office, 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 340, Washington, DC 20036.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	College Applicants; *College Bound Students; College Preparation; Financial Needs; Higher Education; High Schools; High School Students; *Hispanic Americans; Need Analysis (Student Financial Aid); Parent Financial Contribution; *Parent Role; *Paying for College; Student Costs; *Student Financial Aid; Student Loan Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Hispanic American Education; *Hispanic American Students; Latinos

ABSTRACT

One in a series of booklets for Hispanic American parents on making the most of a child's education, this volume provides specific information on ways in which parents and their children can apply for and obtain financial assistance for going to college. Chapter 1 addresses saving for college, how much to save, and financial aid, explaining that it is not charity. Chapter 2 explores financial aid in more detail, including what it pays for, different kinds of aid, how it is distributed, and where it comes from. Chapter 3 explains how to apply for financial aid and covers how to obtain the Federal Student Aid Form, when to file it, where to find assistance with filling it out, other forms that colleges may request, and contacting private aid donors. Chapter 4 addresses problems that arise when the aid is not enough to cover costs and advises options such as reviewing the budget, negotiating with the school, thinking about starting at a community college, loans, and military options. Each chapter closes with discussion questions. Contains six references. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ASPIRA Association, Inc.
Institute for Policy Research

ED359293

Making the Most of Your Child's Education Volume III: WHAT ABOUT COLLEGE?

Book III: Paying for College

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Petrovich
ASPIRA Association
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD029320

Prepared for the ASPIRA Hispanic Opportunities through Parent Educational Support (High HOPES) Project

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Hispanic Opportunities through Parent Educational Support (High HOPES) Project is funded by the Philip Morris Companies.

Making the Most of Your Child's Education Volume III:
WHAT ABOUT COLLEGE?

Book III: Paying for College

Prepared for the ASPIRA Hispanic Opportunities through Parent Educational Support (High HOPES) Project

© 1993, ASPIRA Association, Inc.: Washington, DC

Written and produced by Elizabeth Weiser Ramírez and
Providence Rodríguez-Floresca
with Elena Pell
Artwork by Hugo Bonilla

Forward

ASPIRA knows the power of a group of parents who have confidence in their own ability to create change. ASPIRA has helped develop that ability in Latino youth and families for over three decades.

Under the **Community Mobilization for Educational Excellence (COMEX)** initiative, ASPIRA began a full compliment of programs which forged stronger relationships between Latino families, their communities, and local educators. COMEX programs include **Teachers, Organizations, and Parents for Students (TOPS), Hispanic Opportunities through Parent Educational Support (High HOPES)** and **ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence (APEX).**

The **High HOPES** project provides the opportunity to introduce a third volume in ASPIRA's series of parent guides called, *Making the Most of Your Child's Education.* This newest volume gives advice and guidance to parents in promoting and planning for their children's access to higher education.

For further information on the High HOPES project contact:

ASPIRA, Inc. of Illinois
1567 N. Milwaukee Avenue
Chicago, IL 60622
(312) 252-0970

ASPIRA of New York, Inc.
470 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10018
(212) 564-6880

About These Guides

Through ASPIRA's programs, we have published these guides to help parents get involved in and improve their children's education. Volume I, *Making the Most of Your Child's Education: A Guide for Parents*, was created to offer practical advice to Latino parents on how to help their children's educational and developmental success in elementary through high school years. Volume II in the series, *Making the Most of Your Child's Education: More Topics for Parents*, gives more ideas on what parents can do to make schools in their community better.

The High HOPES project provided the opportunity to develop a third volume in the series, *Making the Most of Your Child's Education: What About College?*, based on the same approach used in these other highly successful parent involvement materials. This latest three-part publication gives parents good advice on what you can do for your child's college career.

The *Making the Most of Your Child's Education Volume III: What About College?* series consists of three books:

Book I - Preparing for College - Encourages you to think about college and decide whether college is a good option for your child.

Book II - Planning for College - Provides specific information through which you can assist your child to:

(a) academically prepare for college;
(b) choose the "right" college;
(c) apply to college.

Book III - Paying for College - Helps calm one of the biggest fears about college -- how to pay for it -- by providing various ways in which you and your child can apply for and obtain financial assistance.

Our goal is to give you practical advice and information to face the educational challenges confronting your children. These booklets will help you begin taking the necessary steps so that some day you can proudly watch your child receive a college degree and begin a bright and successful future.

Acknowledgements

ASPIRA would like to extend its gratitude to Fredericka Cuenca, Northeast Field Director, Midwest/Northeast Voter Registration and Education Project, and formerly Senior Policy Analyst, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, for taking time out of her busy schedule to serve as an outside reviewer for this guide.

Introduction

Congratulations! You almost certainly can be the proud parent of a college student!

"Who, me?" you may ask. "But my daughter just gets average grades. My son doesn't know what he wants to do. My family isn't rich--we could never afford college. No one has ever gone to college in our family."

All the same, <u>you</u> can be the proud parent of a college student.

Just the fact that you are reading this booklet shows that you are interested. Remember: Without planning, almost no one can go to college. But with planning, <u>anybody</u> can.

To keep things simple, we say "parent" in these books, but we mean all of you who are the guardians of our children.

To make these books more personal, we alternate talking about "him" and "her" in our chapters instead of "them".

Table of Contents

Chapter One:
Saving for College
1

Chapter Two:
What Should My Child and I Know About Financial Aid?
7

Chapter Three:
How Do We Apply for Financial Aid?
17

Chapter Four:
What Can We Do If the Aid Isn't Enough?
27

Chapter 1:
Saving for College

Miguel and Anita Girón are sitting at the kitchen table in silence. In front of them is the savings account book, showing the money they have carefully put away, year after year, for Rebeca's college education. They thought they were doing so well. But they also have in front of them the catalogue from the college Rebeca really wants to go to. The cost is more than they could have imagined. Anita looks sadly at Miguel. It seems impossible that anyone could save that much money.

Your child wants to go to college. Now comes the big worry: How will you ever pay for her college education?

You've probably heard the stories: tuition at the top private colleges can cost $17,000 a year or more, and then there's her room, and food, and books, and materials, and clothes, and travel expenses, and spending money, and, and, and . . . What's a poor parent to do?

Relax!

Sometimes parents think they have to save enough to pay the whole cost of four years of college, **but this isn't true.** Colleges, organizations, and the state and federal government provide grants and loans to help families pay for college.

Chapter One

Going to college is a lot like seeing doctors and getting check ups and tests that keep you well so you can live a good, healthy life. The bills can seem enormous, but then your family pays only a part of the cost and health insurance pays the rest.

With college bills, this "health insurance" is called **financial aid.**

What is Financial Aid?

Financial aid is money that the government, the state, the college, and private organizations give to families to help pay for college.

The less money your family has, the more likely it is that you qualify to receive financial aid.

Financial aid is <u>not</u> charity--more than half of all college students get financial aid.

As with most government programs, applying for financial aid means filling out many papers and meeting deadlines. It isn't an easy process. But if your child doesn't apply, she probably will be missing out on several hundred to several thousand dollars worth of aid that could be hers.

How much will my child and I have to save for her education?

You should save as much as you can, but instead of worrying that the amount you have saved is too little, think of it as a family scholarship fund for your child that will help her pay for <u>part</u> of her schooling. If your child has an after-school job, she also could contribute a part of her earnings to this "scholarship fund."

Don't worry if you can only save a little bit at a time. If you saved even $18 a month over the course of your child's life, by the time she goes to college you would have enough to give her a $1000 "scholarship" for each of her four years of school! If you haven't been saving money so far, it's not too late to start. You will be expected to pay something. But even a $100 "scholarship" is a help to a child going to college.

Some parents think that if their child pays for her own education, it will teach her self-discipline and the value of hard work. However, financial aid donors don't think that way. They believe that **parents have an obligation to pay for as much of their child's education as they can.**

Financial aid donors know that parents also have to pay for rent, food and the expenses of the rest of the family. They expect the child to help pay for her education with a summer or part-time job. But they also know that today it is almost impossible for a student to earn enough money alone to pay for her schooling.

Remember: Financial aid is out there, and if you are an average Hispanic family you probably qualify for some of it.

College payment is like a three-legged stool--one leg is financial aid, one leg is money your child earns working part-time while she's in school, and one leg is the money you, the parent, have saved or earn to contribute. Maybe financial aid is the biggest leg of the stool, but the other two legs are still expected to contribute something to holding the stool up.

Does my family qualify for financial aid?

You may have heard people talking about how college costs are going up each year, and how there isn't enough financial aid to go around. It is true that money is tighter these days. But according to a financial aid expert, if your family earns less than $20,000 per year then you probably qualify for financial aid to cover nearly the entire cost of college. If your family earns less than $35,000, you will still qualify for some financial aid.

Discussion Questions

Ask members of the group:

1. What are some ways that parents and children can save money for college without it taking a big chunk out of the family budget?

2. How can parents encourage children to save for college?

Chapter Two: What Should My Child and I Know About Financial Aid?

Mr. Eliseo walks into his job, shaking his head at a piece of paper he's holding. "All right, hot shots," he says to his workmates. "You told me to let Martín fill out those applications for college because he'd get financial aid. Well, here's the paper saying he got aid, but they sure make it confusing. It looks like they're giving him a loan and a grant. Plus I think they're giving him some kind of job. And he won that scholarship before. But I don't know why they have so many different programs. And we'll still have to pay about $500 next year. This is a crazy system."

What does financial aid pay for?

The financial aid money your child gets pays for four things:

1. his **tuition** at college
2. his rent and food costs (this is called **room and board**)
3. his **books** and school materials, and
4. his **living expenses**

Financial aid can be used to pay for these things because schools know that all of them are part of the cost of going to college. The government and each college have people who decide:

- how much it will cost your child to live, eat, and study at their school, and
- how much of that cost your child and you can afford to pay.

Let's look at an example of how financial aid works:

$10,000	Let's say it costs a total of $10,000 per year for your child to live and study at a college.
- $ 2,000	The Financial Aid Office of the college looks at information you send about your family's finances, and decides that your child and you can afford to pay $2,000 of that cost. The $2,000 you can afford to pay is deducted from the $10,000 it will cost for your child to attend college.
$ 8,000	The rest--$8,000--is your family's **financial need**.
- $ 5,000	The government looks at the information you send about your family's finances and says it will offer you $5,000 in financial aid. The $5,000 is deducted from your family's financial need of $8,000.

$ 3,000

This leaves $3,000 which you will still need to send your child to that college.

It is the job of the Financial Aid Office of the school your child will attend to find the rest of the money (the $3,000) your child needs to go to that school.

Does the college always find the money your child needs? No, but they try, and we'll talk later in this chapter about what you can do to help them.

What kinds of financial aid are there?

Will your child just receive a check for this $8,000 of total financial need? Probably not.

Financial aid comes in three forms: **grants, loans,** and **college work-study**.

- A **grant** is money that is a gift to your child, that he uses to pay for college.
- A **loan** is money that your child will have to pay back.
- **Work-study** is a program where the school pays your child to work at a job for about ten hours a week.

Grants

Grants include any scholarships that your child wins because of his achievement in some area (academics, sports, music, etc.). Grants also include any gifts of money given to your child for his education. These gifts are usually given if your family has a large amount of financial need. **Grants and scholarships do not need to be paid back. They are a gift to your child.**

Loans

Many families are afraid to take out loans to pay for their children's education, and don't see what good the offer of loan money is. However, student loans are considered financial aid because the interest rate on them is much lower than on other types of loans. For example, it's about one-third of the interest charged on a credit card. Also, **your child does not have to start paying the loan back until six months after he finishes college.**

When you think that a college graduate will earn more than twice what a high school graduate earns each year, then the idea of spending ten years paying back a $10,000 loan doesn't seem so bad. In addition, if your child serves in the Peace Corps or several other volunteer programs after college, part of his loans could be repaid by the government. You and your child may want ask about this possibility as he applies to schools, since for some programs he needs to join while still in college in order to have his loans repaid later.

Work-study

College work-study money allows your child to work a few hours per week to earn money for school and living expenses. The federal government and the college pay your child's salary. Most work-study jobs are on the college campus, although by law students also have the opportunity to work in community agencies. If your child is persistent, his work-study job can help him develop new skills or give him experience in the field he's studying and wants to work in after college.

How is financial aid money distributed?

There are two kinds of financial aid: **need-based aid** and **merit-based aid**.

- **Need-based aid** means that the most money goes to the families who have the greatest financial need. Low-interest loan programs, work-study, and some federal grant programs are need-based.

- **Merit-based aid** means that the money goes to the student who got the best grades or the best test scores, who is the best athlete, or who has some other characteristic that the college wants. Scholarship programs are merit-based.

Some aid is a combination of these two kinds.

In general, poor students will get more aid than rich students; and poor students with an 'A' average in high school will get more aid than poor students with a 'C' average.

Where does the aid come from?

You may be wondering where this money comes from. There are four sources of financial aid: the federal government, state government, colleges, and private aid.

1) The federal government

The federal government has several grant and loan programs that give out millions of dollars each year to qualifying students. Most of this money is need-based aid, which means that families with the most financial need get the money first.

The two biggest programs are the **Pell Grant** program, which gives families grants of up to several thousand dollars; and the **Stafford Loan** program, which allows students to take out a low-interest loan and pay it back after finishing college.

2) Your state government

Each state offers some aid so that students from low-income families get some grant money. Sometimes this is restricted to the low-income students with the best grades or test scores.

3) Colleges

The government tells the college's Financial Aid Office how much federal financial aid they will offer your child. Then the college's Financial Aid Office looks at your family's financial need and decides how much more aid they can offer you.

A lot of this college aid is merit-based. This means that the school can offer your child an academic scholarship if he has good grades, or an athletic scholarship if he excels at some sport, or a scholarship because he wants to major in a particular field. The fact that your child is a Latino can be helpful to his chances of receiving aid, because most colleges are trying to increase the diversity of students on their campuses.

Will the college give my child enough aid?

You may have realized by now that if you can afford to pay $2,000 per year for your child, he'll have a lot more financial need if the college he picks costs $10,000 per year than if it costs $3,000 per year. This should mean that he will be offered more financial aid by the more expensive school. Often, too, expensive schools have more aid money that they can give out to students than less expensive schools do. However, this is not always true.

Often the more expensive school does offer you more aid, but still not enough to meet their costs. That's why it is VERY IMPORTANT to apply to a variety of schools. After each school offers you its **financial aid package** (the mix of grants, loans, and work-study it will give), then you and your child can decide which school is the best pick.

4) Private aid

Before you turn down a good school because the financial aid isn't enough, you should know about the fourth source of aid. This is called private aid. Private aid is all the scholarships given out by companies, churches, clubs, individuals, and foundations.

All this money is "targeted," which means that your child must have certain characteristics to receive it. For example, most private aid donors say that students must

have good grades. Many insist that the students they give aid to also be connected to them in some way--like being members of the church or club, or having parents who work for the company. There are also scholarships for people of certain ethnic and racial backgrounds. Some private aid also goes to people who are studying a particular career.

There are many directories that provide information about where to apply for private aid. Check your local library or see if your community has an education resource center where you can get this information. Chapter Three of this book has more information about how to find out about private aid.

Discussion Questions

Ask members of the group:

1. What are some of the kinds of things financial aid can pay for?
2. What kinds of financial aid are there?
3. Where does financial aid come from?

Chapter Three: How Do We Apply for Financial Aid?

Susana is waiting for her grandmother to come home from work one evening, a folder of papers in her hand.

"Grandma, I need your help with more college stuff," she says.

"More? Susanita, I thought you already applied to all those colleges!"

Susana shakes her head. "The counselor says that now I have to make sure all my financial aid forms are filled out. I think I have everything." She sounds a little uncertain. "Can you help me to be sure?"

Fill out and send the Free Application for Federal Student Aid Form.

The most important thing you and your child can do to receive financial aid is to fill out the **Free Application for Federal Student Aid Form**. The high school guidance office probably will have this form by December, or your child can get it from the college. Make sure she also gets the instructions that go with the form.

All of the information you give on this form is used by the federal government and the colleges to which your child applies to decide how much need-based financial aid they will give her.

There is a very specific deadline for this form. **Families have to fill out the form and send it in as soon after January 1 as they can, but not before January 1.** (If you send it in before January 1, the form will be sent back to you.) This is the January before your child starts college--the year that she is a high school senior.

By this time she should have already applied to several colleges, but don't wait to find out if she was accepted by them. Go ahead, fill out and send in the financial aid form.

The U.S. government has tried to simplify this form so families can understand it better, but it can still be confusing. If you or your child have any questions about federal financial aid or about filling out the form, you can ask the same guidance counselors that help your child plan for college. You can also call the federal government's toll-free hotline for help at 1-800-4 FED AID (that's 1-800-433-3243).

Just like it's important to send in the correct forms on time, it's also important **not to leave any questions blank**. If your family needs help filling out the forms, you can talk with your child's guidance counselor or a community-based counselor.

1-800-4 FED AID

In general, the financial aid form asks you and your child a lot of questions about your income and your expenses, and also about how many people your family is supporting. There are sections for parents to fill out and sections for your child.

You will need to know your much income your family earned in the past year. The best way to get this information is from your income tax return. Therefore, it is best to fill out your income tax forms as early as possible. Although you can turn in your financial aid form up until the beginning of May, it is better to do everything--taxes and financial aid--as early as you can.

Note: your child will need a social security number to fill out this form and many others. If she does not have one yet, she should get it as soon as possible so there is no delay in getting the forms done on time.

Remember, the government believes that you have an obligation to pay part of your child's college expenses.

- If the government's calculations show that you can afford to pay some money but you decide that you won't pay anything, then you are guaranteeing that your child will not receive enough financial aid. Why? Because financial aid officers automatically count your income when they calculate your child's financial need.

- If you refuse to fill out the parent sections of the financial aid forms, then you are guaranteeing that your child will receive no financial aid, unless she can convince some school to give her special treatment. The way the system is set up, it is both children's and parents' responsibility to pay what they can.

The end of the form will ask your child to list which colleges she wants the financial information sent to. Make sure to list every college your child applied to. It also asks whether you want this financial aid information sent to agencies in your state. Check yes! That way your child will be considered for State financial aid as well.

The application for federal financial aid is free. This is a new change starting in 1993 to make it easier for low-income families to apply for financial aid.

Fill out and send in any other financial aid forms that are recommended by the colleges your child is interested in.

After you fill out the federal Free Application for Federal Student Aid Form, there may still be some forms that your state or specific college need you to fill out. Some colleges also ask students to fill out another federal form so they can have more information. Some of these forms she probably will fill out with her application.

Your child should check with the Financial Aid Office of <u>every</u> school she is applying to, and make sure she fills out <u>all</u> the forms they recommend to her.

She can also ask her high school or community guidance counselor for any additional state financial aid forms.

Finally, if she can't find state information anywhere else she can write or call the State Scholarship Agency in your state's capital. That number should be in the phone book, or she can call information for your state's capital city and ask for the telephone number of the agency.

What about non-citizens?

Unfortunately, students who are not citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. are not eligible for most federal and state financial aid. If your child is not a citizen or permanent resident, the best thing you can do is talk directly with the Financial Aid Office of the colleges she is interested in to explain your situation and ask for help.

Contact private aid donors.

The other place to find financial aid is through private aid donors. There are many scholarships out there. However, they take time to find and often have many restrictions. The end of this chapter lists a few places you can turn to for help.

In addition, your child should check with several places where you live. She (or you) should ask the following people if they know of any sources of scholarships that she can apply for:

- her guidance counselor or any other community counselor,
- your church,
- any veterans' organizations, clubs, or unions you belong to,
- the company you work for,
- the local Chamber of Commerce.

She can also find scholarship guides and directories at her local and school libraries or through a college counseling office (in her school or in the community).

Especially for Hispanic students, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute has a new service that can match your child with private aid she could qualify for. She can call them toll-free at 1-800 EXCEL DC (that's 1-800-392-3532).

You probably should make sure that your child does the research for private aid by the very beginning of her senior year of high school, so she has time to send away for information and meet all the application deadlines. It could be a summer project for her to collect all the information.

Each private aid donor has its own restrictions on who it gives aid to. Each donor also has its own application process with its own deadlines.

Make sure your child reads the information she receives carefully so she is certain that she qualifies for the aid. If scholarships are offered only for a certain group, and she isn't a member of that group, then she would be wasting her time filling out that application form.

Whether your child is filling out a form or writing an open essay, she should follow these recommendations:

Applying for private aid

Your child should:

1) make a copy of the application and practice filling it out;

2) type the answers onto the real form only after she is sure that she knows what she wants to say, and that what she says is spelled and written correctly; and

3) make a copy of the final document, with a record of the day she mailed it, and keep the copy.

It can be risky to rely only on private aid for the money to go to college. But as an addition, the extra money she may get in exchange for a few nights of filling out applications will certainly be worth it!

Discussion Questions

Ask the group to share ideas:

1. What are some possible places in your community where parents can get information on financial aid?

2. What can parents do to help their child get scholarships?

Chapter Four: What Can We Do If the Aid Isn't Enough?

The first year it had been so perfect. They had filled out all the forms on time, sent in the essays, and Paco had even had an interview with a private donor. Their hard work had paid off--Paco got the financial aid he needed to attend a college he loved. This year, however, is different. The private scholarship was only for a year and the school won't pick up the extra cost. The Durán's know they can't pay more than they already are. What are they going to do?

This is the final question that you may face as you try to get your child into college. Sometimes what the college thinks you can afford to pay for your child's education just seems like way more than you can really afford. If your child has been accepted by several schools, he can pick the one that offers him the best financial aid package. But what if he really wants to go to a school that doesn't give him as much aid, or his aid is cut after his first year? What can you do?

Look at your budget again.

Has it ever happened to you that your rent suddenly went up a lot? Your first reaction is, "I'll never be able to pay that extra money!" But since you have to do it, you just start, and somehow the rest of your expenses arrange themselves around that increase. Not that you aren't struggling, but somehow it works out. Sometimes, the new expense of paying for college can be like that.

Before you decide it's impossible, look once more at your expenses to make sure. Don't forget, too, that your child should be helping contribute to his education. Even a part-time job at minimum wage would allow him to save some money during the summer.

Other times, though, your family absolutely cannot afford the money the school says they can. What then?

Negotiate with the school.

Most financial aid officers will be happy to talk with you and your child about his financial aid package. Make an appointment with someone in the Financial Aid Office. (You also can bring a friend to translate if that would make you more comfortable.)

Don't just go in, though, and say that the aid isn't enough. Remember, they looked at the information you gave them to decide on that amount. Be prepared to explain why there are special circumstances.

- Make a list of the extra expenses you have that the financial aid form didn't ask you about. Many Hispanic adults are taking care of more relatives than just their children. If you are caring for a grandmother or a cousin's child or are sending money to family in your home country, make sure the financial aid office knows about this extra expense.

- If another college offered your child more financial aid, bring that letter with you to show this school.

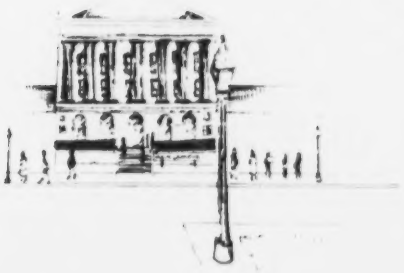
If the financial aid officer agrees to give your child more money, you will want to have something in writing. Make sure you know the name of the person you are talking to before you leave the office.

When you get home, you or your child can write a letter to this person, saying: "Thank you for meeting with us. I am glad to hear that your college will offer my child an extra $(fill in the amount) in loans (or grants or work-study)." Then keep a copy of your letter!

Think about starting in a community college.

Many Latino families think of community colleges as their very first option for a college education. Community colleges are usually less expensive.

Chapter Four



If your child decides to start in a community college to save money in his first two years of school, remember that he must choose his classes very carefully so they will transfer to the four-year school.

Take out a loan from a bank.

This is a hard decision to make. If you take out a regular loan (not a student loan):

- you will be responsible for paying it back (not your child),
- the interest rates will be higher than the student loan rates, and
- you'll have to begin paying it right away.

Some families just don't think they can do this. But for other families, a bank loan may be the only way they can find the cash they need.

The federal government has a program called **Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS)** where the government guarantees the loans and the interest rates are slightly lower than normal. If you decide to take out a loan, you may want to ask your bank about PLUS loans.

Consider the military's college programs.

This is also a very personal decision for each young person. The armed services provide qualified students with college scholarships in exchange for some number of years of active and reserve military service. For some young people this is a useful way to go to college, although it is, of course, not for everyone.

Begin now to plan for next year.

Remember, the aid your child receives is just for one year. Next year he will be applying all over again. If you don't think he received enough financial aid this year, help him to plan now to get more next year.

- Have him look again at **all the sources of private aid**--maybe there's a scholarship he didn't qualify for last year, but this year when he applies he gets it. Or maybe there's a new scholarship he didn't know about last year.

- Make sure he picks up financial aid forms at his college Financial Aid Office in the fall. Work together to send in everything--federal forms, state forms, college forms--**as soon as you possibly can after January 1**.

- Remind him that the better his grades are, the better his chances of receiving some merit-based aid.

If he has time to study and still work a bit, have your child talk with his school's career office to see if they have a listing of part-time and summer jobs in the area around his campus. He also can watch the school bulletin boards and check the local newspapers.

Most importantly, don't despair completely if lack of money makes it impossible for your child to attend the college he most wants to go to, or if he has to transfer to a less expensive college after the first year or so.

In general, most colleges and universities in the United States will give your child a good education.

Whatever the cost, most colleges will challenge him to learn new things and help him grow into a mature adult with the abilities he needs to succeed.

Whatever college your child attends and graduates from, his accomplishment will be something we can all be very proud of.

Discussion Questions

Discuss with the group:

1. What are some options if your child isn't able to get enough financial aid, or if his aid is cut off after his first year of college?

2. What can parents do to help their child plan ahead for the next years of school?

Sources Consulted

Berry, Robyn, "The Paper Chase: A Middle-Class Scramble for College Funds," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 1992.

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Inc. "Financial Aid Tips," Washington, DC: unpublished paper, 1992.

Educational Testing Service, "Preparing for College: A Four-Year Experience," Princeton, NJ: unpublished paper, 1991.

Keller, Gary D., *College is for You and You are for College*. Princeton, NJ: College Entrance Examination Board and Educational Testing Service, 1991.

Shields, Charles J., *The College Guide for Parents*. Chicago, IL: Surrey Books, Inc., 1986.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *What's It Worth? Educational Background and Economic Status: Spring 1987*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990.

What is ASPIRA?

The ASPIRA Association, Inc. is the only national nonprofit organization devoted solely to serving and advocating on behalf of Puerto Rican and other Latino youth. With major programmatic efforts in leadership development and education, ASPIRA also conducts research and informs policymakers on issues critical to Latinos. Its offices are located in six states, Puerto Rico, and Washington, D.C. ASPIRA's central mission is advancing the development of the Latino community. To fulfill that mission, ASPIRA each year provides direct services to approximately 17,000 youth and their families.

ASPIRA Associate Offices are located in:
Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and Connecticut (affiliate office)

ASPIRA Association, Inc.
National Office
1112 16th Street, NW, Suite 340
Washington, DC 20036
202/835-3600

Sponsored by:

Philip Morris Companies